

Books By Anthony Cave Brown

BODYGUARD OF LIES
THE SECRET WAR REPORT OF THE O.S.S. (Editor)
THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE ATOMIC BOMB (Editor, with
Charles B. MacDonald)

DROP SHOT

The United States Plan
for War with the
Soviet Union in 1957

Edited by
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LIST OF MAPS

Allied Strategy	58
Total Estimated Volume of U.S. Supply of Strategic and Critical Materials by World Areas in the Event of War with the U.S.S.R., 1957-1959	86
Estimated Relative Importance to the U.S. of World Areas as Sources of Strategic and Critical Materials in the Event of War with the U.S.S.R., 1957-1959	88
Soviet Capabilities in Europe and the Near and Middle East	127
Priority Facilities in the U.S.	188
U.S.-Canadian Fighter Intercept Capabilities	196
Deployment of Allied Forces for the Defense of the Western Hemisphere	198
Centers of Control and Mining Targets	204
Deployment of Forces for Conducting the Allied Air Offensive	208
Deployment of Forces for Conducting Allied Offensive Operations to Destroy Enemy Naval Forces	210
Deployment of Allied Forces for Holding the Rhine-Alps-Piave Line	216
Deployment of Forces for Holding Southeast Turkey, Tigris Valley, and the Persian Gulf	222
Deployment of Allied Forces in the Pacific and Indian Oceans	226
Sea and Air Lines of Communication (LOC's)	232
Deployment of Allied Forces in the Barents-Norwegian Sea, Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean-Arabian Sea Areas	234
Employment of Allied Forces for Major Land Offensive in Europe	260
Soviet Electric Power System, 1957	290
Known Soviet Petroleum Refineries, 1957	294
Soviet Steel Ingot Capacity, 1957	296

EDITOR'S PROLOGUE

Plan Dropshot was the United States' plan for world war with the Soviet Union. It was prepared by a committee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1949 with the authority and knowledge of President Harry S Truman. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs was General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, and Dropshot's basis was that atomic war would break out on 1 January 1957. The date was politically irrelevant; it was selected for planning purposes only. However, Dropshot was the main military planning production of the times, and its existence was the outcome of the menacing events of the first years of the Cold War. As such, Dropshot (the code name was deliberately meaningless and was selected to confuse the Soviet intelligence agencies) is a document of immense importance. It was, after all, the flow sheet for Armageddon.

Dropshot was promulgated in three volumes of green-colored paper late in 1949. It became public property in 1977 through the United States' Freedom of Information Act and may now be purchased at the National Archives for fifteen cents a page. This incongruous fact belittles its importance, for at the time nothing could have been more secret. Indeed, the parts of it pertaining to purely conventional war might, one would have thought, still be considered secret. After all, military geography does not change. And conventional weapons change only in the degree of their destructiveness. Therefore the battlefields of 1949-1957 could well be the battlefields of a future war.

These obvious facts lead to a critical question: Was it not folly to make Dropshot public? I have thought extensively about this point, and I am bound to conclude that it was folly to release this document. It should have been burned, buried, or preserved in some secret vault, for it cannot endear America to Russia. As will be seen, not only was Dropshot the blueprint for the atomization of Russia, but it provided also for the occupation by American armies of that vast continent—and for the eradication by the roots of Bolshevism. Doubtless, at this critical time—the Cold War may have ended, if only temporarily, but the political and ideological war goes on with undiminished intensity—the Russians will argue that Dropshot constitutes an example of America's continuing bellicosity toward Russia and that therefore Russia must maintain and expand her armed forces.

Why, therefore, was Dropshot made public? The Joint Chiefs were not required by law to declassify it. The law expressly states that certain documentation may remain secret if the national interest so dictates. The question, therefore, becomes a tantalizing one in which several conjectures are possible. The first is that there was no point in keeping it secret because the Russians already knew all about it. This is conceivable; Dropshot was hatched at a time of considerable Soviet intelligence activity. But this conjecture may be a little too fanciful—although frequently in 1948 Stalin did refer to American war plans,

and his representative at the United Nations, Andrei Vishinsky, did allege that America was planning atomic war against Russia over Berlin.

But we should look elsewhere for the reason that this document was made public. Is it possible that Dropshot was some gigantic blind, that it was created to hide some other more relevant plan? This conjecture borders upon paranoia. Is it possible that it was released by somebody in the Pentagon (1) to torpedo detente or (2) to alarm and inform the American people? Certainly Dropshot is an alarming and informative document—for the document and its associated papers, when read together, shows that (1) the United States might well have lost World War III; (2) Russia would probably have succeeded in occupying all Western Europe in twenty days; (3) the U.S. Air Force thought that Russia would be able to knock Britain—then America's principal ally with bases of the first importance to the successful conduct of the atomic riposte—out of the war within sixty days; (4) Russian atomic attacks combined with Communist guerrilla warfare within the United States would have gravely impaired America's ability and will to make war; (5) America could not defend her own cities; (6) it would have taken America at least two years to bring her industry and armed forces to a pitch that would have enabled her military to return to Europe; and (7) America intended to occupy Russia and thereby risk interminable guerrilla warfare in that country.

But alarm and information may have been only part of the decision to release Dropshot—if indeed there was a motive. My personal view is that there was no motive in the Joint Chiefs' astounding action in declassifying Dropshot. The simple fact is that in all respects Dropshot was considered obsolete; that given the state of weaponry today it is no longer relevant; that we have reached the edge of doomsday; and that therefore Dropshot does not matter.

If this was the case, then we must proceed to the next major questions about Dropshot. Why was it necessary to write Dropshot at all? And what was its history? Obviously generals exist to protect their country, and to protect their country they must have plans. But surely it is one thing to plan for the defense of one's frontiers and another to plan for a world war. I do not think this plan was written for a preventive war (although clearly preventive war crossed the minds of the generals, as we shall see). Nor do I believe the old Kremlin bogey that America intended to start a war before Russia got too powerful. I believe that Dropshot was written because global war seemed likely at the time; indeed it seemed the only kind of war. This thinking was clearly wrong, and it demonstrates how easily global war might arise through miscalculation—for when Korea erupted, the conflict was confined to that peninsula, and while the world was politically involved, it was not militarily involved.

To repeat, Dropshot was little more than a contingency plan for a war that might arise through the Cold War. It is necessary therefore to examine briefly what was meant by that term and how it arose.

The Cold War was that state of no war, no peace in which the globe found itself at the end of World War II. The editor believes that that conflict—which

produced much smoke but little fire—was a historical inevitability. As surely as commotion is produced when two of the earth's plates rub together, two mighty forces, capitalism and Communism, found themselves rubbing together dangerously in many parts of the world.

The consequences of this friction were predictable. Truman felt the cold wrath and malevolence (only some of it justified) of his late ally in the war against Hitler, Josef Stalin. This produced a state of labyrinthine, shrill political warfare that gradually deteriorated into a state of near war. In turn, the United States began a form of war planning purely as insurance. But these plans could not compare with the Rainbow and Pot of Gold series produced by the U.S. Army and Navy for the war with Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo.

General Eisenhower, then still Commander-in-chief of U.S. forces in Europe, produced a plan for war with Russia in Europe called Totality. That was late in 1945. But the plan was an incongruous document: there were few troops, fewer aircraft, no armies to give it teeth. It was, therefore, hardly worth the paper it was written on.

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The Pentagon's Joint Intelligence Staff promulgated a study entitled *Strategic Vulnerability of Russia to a Limited Air Attack*, and only fifty-one days after the Russo-American alliance dissolved with the surrender of Japan, the Staff presented its report. In brief it visualized a limited air attack with atomic bombs on twenty Russian cities in the event that war developed between Russia and America in Europe. This seems to have been the first serious joint study for an air war against Russia, and its objective was to destroy Russia's capacity to make and sustain land warfare by wrecking her industrial and research-and-development centers.

There were other plans, or variations of existing plans. But none of them amounted to much. Then, late in 1946, Winston Churchill surveyed the bitter animosities in a speech at Fulton, Missouri, and proclaimed the Cold War. Stalin retaliated by making it clear that he believed that coexistence between the capitalist and Communist systems was not possible. The result of these speeches was that America moved further to the right while the rest of the world moved further to the left.

As happened after World War I, the victors seemed unable to agree on a peace—and were therefore in danger of losing it. The position was complicated by the fact that Europe had lost the political leadership of the world, and the British, French, and Dutch empires were collapsing irremediably. The United Nations began to seem as fruitless a forum as had been the League of Nations; the atomic tests at Bikini increased people's apprehensions about the future of mankind; the Gouzenko spy case in Canada demonstrated that sinister Russian quality called stealth—and showed that she meant business over the atomic bomb; the Russians hamstrung the Security Council nine times in its first year of trying to preserve the peace; and there were dangerous frictions between the Western democracies and Communism everywhere they met—in Germany, Austria, Indochina, China, Malaya, Indonesia, Burma, Turkey, Greece, Persia,

Korea. Weapons technology leaped ahead against a prospect of political disintegration. In particular, biological warfare showed that diseases of humans, animals, and plants could be spread on a wholesale scale. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes announced a "firm" policy toward Russia, America was wracked by strikes that seemed to many to have been organized by the Communists, the Soviet-sponsored party swamped Berlin's first postwar elections, and Britain was bankrupt.

All around, everywhere, there was disorder and chaos. But these elements in 1946 were inconsequential as against those of 1947.

In that year the great schism opened between East and West, and it was clear that an epic struggle for world hegemony was beginning between America and Russia. Two worlds had emerged: one led by the White House, the other by the Kremlin.

The United Nations was shaken to its foundations, and the attempt to write a peace treaty for Germany was postponed, seemingly indefinitely. Britain granted independence to India, which promptly dissolved into a large-scale religious war in which millions were killed. Palestine produced further similar tensions as the British partitioned the country into one Arab and one Jewish community. Europe hovered on the edge of bankruptcy, famine, the plague, and anarchy. A serious recession set in in America; the Communists were hyperactive throughout the world and especially in Latin America—which seemed to present a direct threat to the United States. Greece and Turkey appealed to the United States for assistance against Communist menaces. And Truman enunciated his Doctrine—the most important step in the Cold War after Churchill's speech at Fulton.

The Albanian Communist militia mined some British warships in the Corfu Channel. Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania were accused in the UN of giving aid and comfort to the outlawed Greek Communist guerrillas. The Communists took over in Hungary in a brief, violent *coup d'état*. Secretary of State George C. Marshall announced his plan to help Europe recover economically in a speech at Harvard, and Stalin reestablished the old Comintern as a riposte. British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin announced in London that British appeasement of Russia was at an end; the Dutch attacked in the Indonesian islands; Stalin's representative at the United Nations accused the United States of warmongering, and his Foreign Minister in Moscow hinted that Russia now had the atomic bomb; and on the last day of the year Romanian Communists forced King Michael to abdicate.

At home, Truman urged Congress to agree to universal military training and ordered loyalty checks on all executive-branch employees. The armed forces were unified; the House Un-American Activities Committee began its investigation of Communism in America; Truman asked Congress for \$17 billion to help put Europe back on her feet; and the Secretary of State expressed the gravest concern over Communist maneuvers in France and Italy.

To meet all these challenges and menaces, Congress passed the National Security Act of 1947, which, among other things, led to the formation of the Na-

tional Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency. This same act also permitted the Joint Chiefs to begin planning for war. This planning—which led to Dropshot—began against this warning by Major General Curtis Le May: the United States possessed the means to "depopulate vast areas of the earth's surface, leaving only vestigial remnants of man's material works."

An additional impetus to war planning came through the events of 1948. In that year a shooting war seemed inevitable. The Communists seized Czechoslovakia, and the capitalists began building their military, political, and economic alliances in Europe—the alliances that led to NATO. The Communists completed their conquest of North China and supported revolutions or continued warfare in Greece, Indonesia, Burma, Korea, Indochina, and Malaya. The capitalists announced their plans for a government in West Germany, and the Communists retaliated by blockading Berlin, which brought on the Anglo-American airlift. In East Berlin, the Communists established their own government and began rearming the German army, and the Allied Council for Germany and the Berlin Kommandatura collapsed.

The United States accused Russia of massive espionage in the United States and of violating thirty-seven different treaties, and the Hiss case began. Vishinsky accused the United States of planning an atomic attack on the USSR—an allegation that was denied at the time but now seems to have been proved true. Stalin accused the West of wanting to make war over Berlin. This was not true, although the Pentagon had made a plan for such a war. It was called Broiler. It was a limited edition of Dropshot. But one question did emerge out of Stalin's and Vishinsky's allegations: Was somebody at the Pentagon, or attached to it, leaking these plans to Russia? I have already examined that postulation, and my conclusions remain the same. However, each of these allegations did have a grain of truth to them; so the possibility becomes somewhat more tenable, although, of course, it was a simple matter to guess—every general in the West was making some sort of war plan, big or small, at that time.

In Italy the Reds lost, and in Hungary they won—and arrested Cardinal Mindszenty. The UN indicted Greece's Communist neighbors for meddling in Greek affairs. In China the U.S. position collapsed entirely toward the end of the year. The Reds lost in Indonesia but won in Burma—they staged an uprising and the British quit. The Koreans quickly crushed a Red revolt in South Korea, and in the north the Communists proclaimed a Red republic. In Malaya, the Communists were defeated by British troops and the British system, but in Indochina the Communists under Ho Chi Minh continued their revolt.

There was violence throughout the Middle East as the Jews established the state of Israel in 1948; Marshal Tito broke with the Kremlin—Stalin's largest defeat so far; in the United States there was a stock-market crash and Truman seized the railways to prevent economic chaos and further labor trouble.

The best the State Department could tell the President in the middle of the year was that world war was not likely in the next thirty days.

Against this background of commotion on a global scale, the Joint Chiefs au-

thorized the writing of the first global emergency war plan, Charioteer. Its premise was that Europe had been overrun by the Red Army and that the overwhelming strength of Russia was such that only an atomic riposte would restore the authority and power of the Western democracies. Charioteer's political appreciation made the attitude of the United States toward Russia very clear. The plan stated:

Never before have the intentions and strategic objectives of an aggressor nation been so clearly defined. For a hundred years, victory in the class struggle of the proletariat versus the bourgeoisie has been identified as the means by which communism would dominate the world.

The Charioteer planners felt that "the USSR may be entering an era wherein the ultimate objective (of communism) might be gained by military force if all other methods fail."

Therefore the United States must have the plans and capabilities to:

(a) destroy the war-making capacity of the USSR to the extent and in such manner as to permit the accomplishment of the following objectives. (1) To compel the withdrawal of Soviet military and political forces from areas under their control or domination within 1939 boundaries. (2) To create conditions within the Soviet Republic which will insure (a) abandonment of any ideology which advocates world domination or violation of the sovereignty of one or more states by another state (b) the creation of governments which will practice goodwill toward nations to the end that the principle of the United Nations can become effective.

Among the ways that these political objectives would be obtained was to:

Initiate strategic air operations as soon as possible after the outbreak of hostilities by launching a concerted attack employing atomic bombs against governmental, political and administrative centers, urban industrial areas, and selected petroleum targets within the USSR from bases in the western hemisphere and the United Kingdom.

The Strategic Air Command plan associated with Charioteer planned for the delivery of 133 atomic weapons on seventy Russian cities or industrial conurbations, all within thirty days: eight such weapons would be unloaded on Moscow to destroy approximately forty square miles of that city's center; at the same time, a further seven atomic bombs would be delivered to Leningrad, to atomize some thirty-five square miles of Russia's second city and largest port.

Over the ensuing twenty-four months, Russia would then—assuming that she did not surrender immediately, the objective of the first strike—be "treated" to a combination of atomic and conventional warfare. In this phase, which was to continue until she did surrender, some 200 atomic bombs would be employed with some 250,000 tons of high-explosive bombs. It was expected that the first strike would destroy some 30–40 percent of Soviet industry, destroy the petro-

leum industry entirely together with some 6.7 million workers, and bring the Soviet advance in Europe to a halt.

Charioteer was followed by numerous plans and estimates—among them, Cogwheel, Gunpowder, Doublestar, ABC 101, Dualism, and Fleetwood. Fleetwood was by far the most interesting for two reasons: it was part of the planners' response to the Soviets' blockade of Berlin, and it was Dropshot's principal antecedent. We should therefore deal with Fleetwood at length.

The first part of the Fleetwood intelligence plan consisted of a discussion of political factors concerning Russia and her satellites. This was a somber document:

The ultimate object of Soviet policy is the establishment of Communism, directed from Moscow, throughout the world.

Therefore:

In a war between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-American Powers before the end of 1949, the political objectives of the Soviet leaders will be to check the threat to the Soviet orbit inherent in the growing stabilization of the non-Communist world, and to establish Soviet-dominated governments in areas occupied by Soviet forces. The political instruments used in the attainment of these objectives would be:—

- (a) Intensification of the propaganda program which will be designed particularly to undermine the United Front of the Western Allies, to portray the Soviet Union as the defender of all "true democracies" and "peace loving" peoples of the world and to convince the peoples of the world that war has been forced on the Soviet Union by the "imperialistic designs" of the United States and the United Kingdom.
- (b) Maximum exploitation of the Communist parties and dissatisfied minority groups of all countries and their dependencies outside of the Soviet orbit for subversion and sabotage.

The Joint Intelligence Committee estimated the "significant political strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet orbit" to be . . .

STRENGTHS

- (1) The native courage, stamina, and patriotism of the Russian population.
- (2) The elaborate and ruthless machinery by which the Kremlin exercises centralized control in the Soviet orbit, employing police forces, propaganda, and economic and political duress.
- (3) The ideological appeal of theoretical Communism.
- (4) The apparent ability of the Soviet regime to mobilize native Russian patriotism behind a Soviet war effort.
- (5) The ability of the people and the administration to carry on a war under circumstances of extreme disorganization, demonstrated in the early years of World War II.

WEAKNESSES

- (1) Disillusionment and embitterment among the masses throughout the Soviet orbit, resulting from ruthless Soviet and Communist oppression and exploitation.
- (2) The fear pervading all elements in Soviet and Satellite society, which tends to destroy independent thinking and paralyze initiative.
- (3) The traditional admiration of many of the Soviet Union and Satellite peoples for Western democracy in general and the United States in particular.
- (4) Influence of religious groups, especially among the Satellites.
- (5) The native nationalism of the Satellite populations and of certain ethnic groups in the Soviet Union.
- (6) Demoralization which would result from military and occupation duties outside their own country.
- (7) The extreme concentration of power in the Politburo of the Communist Party, which heads the bureaucratic machinery, tends to preclude the assumption of initiative and to discourage individuals at lower levels in the system from making decisions.

But as the evaluation went on to concede, while the strengths "constitute an actual and present advantage to the Soviet Union" the weaknesses "in most cases, are potential rather than actual." Therefore, during the early stages of the war, the weaknesses would not have an early and decisive effect on the outcome of a Soviet military venture. Only slowly would the weaknesses come to be a burden upon Russia's machinery for political control; only slowly would they come to impair the Kremlin's economic and administrative capabilities. In fact, the report warned, during the early stages of war, native Soviet morale "might improve somewhat with reports of spectacular victories and the prospects of booty from Western Europe." It was

unlikely that the psychological weaknesses in the Soviet and Satellite structure would produce serious consequences unless (a) The Soviet orbit were subjected to intensive and effective aerial attack from the West. (b) The prospect for ultimate victory further diminished because of the continued pressure of sea power as exercised through blockade and commerce destruction, although a sea blockade of the Soviet Union would not be as effective as against a more insular power. (c) Or it seemed to them that the Soviet Union was faced with a protracted war doomed to end in Soviet defeat.

Lastly, in the context of potential Russian weakness, the intelligence team thought it "extremely doubtful that the forces of resistance within the Soviet orbit would effectively assert themselves unless and until they received guidance and material support from the West, and saw hope for early liberation by Western forces."

The Fleetwood planners turned to the Communist economic factors. Although in the recent war Russia was estimated to have lost some 20 million dead, most of them able-bodied men, there remained 33 million workers in her national economy—more than enough to maintain a war economy and agricul-

tural forces and armies that would be larger than the combined forces of the Allies. She was deficient in certain war materials—including industrial diamonds, tungsten, tin, cobalt, molybdenum, and some special types of machine tools and precision equipment—but none of these deficiencies was likely to impair Russia's capacity for war, at least in the first stages. In both men and materials Russia would have the resources of her satellites at her disposal, and neither should be discounted.

In general, therefore, the Joint Intelligence Committee conceded to Russia the men and the industry to fight a prolonged major war. However, there was one Achilles' heel in Russian might: her railway system. Russia moved 90 percent of her goods and people by rail, and her rails had been very seriously damaged during the world war. The committee estimated that in 1949 she would be able to move only the same number of trains that she had run in 1940, and because of steel shortages and poor management, rehabilitation and new rails construction would remain well behind their plan. The Trans-Siberian railway could not sustain a major war in Asia for very long, and the difference in gauges between the Russian system and that of Eastern and Central Europe would plague a railway system that was already poorly distributed. At known and easily attacked points, Russia had to tranship goods or change the bogeys from the Russian to the European gauge. And if these points were destroyed by air attack, guerrillas, or sabotage, then the Soviet war plan would be seriously discommoded. As the Joint Intelligence Committee declared, this was a weak factor that "cannot be over-emphasized." Nor could Russia readily overcome this problem—and certainly not with trucks and aircraft.

In terms of the production of major military equipment, the Joint Intelligence Committee thought that in 1948 Russia would produce 12,000 aircraft, 270,000 motor vehicles, and 6,210 tanks and self-propelled guns—a considerable advance over 1945 figures, and larger by far than the combined production of America, England, Canada, and France, the major figures in the alliance. Thus, despite her Achilles' heel, Russia was the world's major land power. And as the Joint Intelligence Committee put it:

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The Soviet Armed Forces, by the close of World War II, had been developed into a powerful military machine. This formidable force was not demobilized in the same sense that the forces of the Western Powers were demobilized. Instead, it was reorganized and put through extensive and intensive training programs and maneuvers with the objective of profiting from the experience gained in the last conflict. Sufficient military industrial support has been kept in being to maintain these forces and to build up reserve stocks.

Therefore, the committee went on:

It is concluded from consideration of Soviet political, economic, and military strengths and weakness factors, that against probable opposing forces [i.e., the United

States, Great Britain and the nations with which they were allied] the Soviets have the combat power to overrun key areas in Europe and Asia.

Against this somber picture of Soviet strength, therefore, the Joint Intelligence Committee considered what it called the *Strategic Intentions of the Soviet Union*. Its main conclusion was that:

The Soviet Union will appreciate that her ultimate objects can be attained only through the overthrow of the two main bastions of democratic power—the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

But how were these bastions to be overthrown? As the committee recognized in the intelligence annex of Plan Fleetwood:

The Soviet leaders will probably appreciate that direct military invasion of the U.S.A. is an almost impossible task. They are likely, therefore, to appreciate that their object can only be achieved in two stages. The first stage would be to defeat the United Kingdom and to complete the domination of [Eurasia]. The second stage would be to consolidate economic and military gains and to put the Soviet Union in an impregnable position, from which the U.S.A. could first be gradually weakened by Communist infiltration or economic exhaustion, and then attacked by armed force.

In short, the U.S. Joint Intelligence Committee conceded to Russia a military position she may never have lost—that Russia, overall, was the world's mightiest power. Her industrial base had been strengthened, not weakened, by the world war, and her ideological position seemed to have global appeal.

By the time this menacing document was in secret circulation, 1948 was turning into Dropshot year: 1949. Nineteen hundred and forty-eight had been such a bad year that the Nobel authorities decided not to award a Peace Prize at all. And if 1948 had been a bad year for the United States, 1949 approached disaster.

The Russians exploded their first atomic bomb, and the great arms race began to produce advanced weapons and the H-bomb. The American position in China finally collapsed, and the largest nation in the world became Communist. Ex-Defense Secretary James V. Forrestal committed suicide, perhaps in despair over the Soviet triumphs. Revolutions broke out in the Latin American republics of Ecuador, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Paraguay. The smallest state in the world—San Marino (population 12,000)—emerged as Communist. George Bernard Shaw called Stalin “the ablest statesman in Europe” and predicted that the West would go Red. Everywhere it seemed that local Communist parties were triumphant—even in Britain. The pound, that symbol of capitalist supremacy, collapsed. And in America eleven members of the Communist party were convicted of treason—convictions that were, in the context of Dropshot, of considerable significance. For it seemed to the Pentagon planners that they had to consider what was happening not only overseas but also at home.

Alarmed by these cases, the Dropshot planners asked the Joint Chiefs' Joint Intelligence Group to make a study of Communist plans and capabilities in the United States in the event of war with Russia. This they did, presenting the Dropshot planners with a paper entitled *Intelligence Estimate on Espionage, Subversion and Sabotage*.

The group warned that Russia would continue its effort to disrupt the American war potential by infiltrating “Communist agents and/or sympathizers into the armed forces, governments, and the general economic life of the United States and other nations of the western hemisphere”:

Small groups of militant Communists have been able to wield power out of proportion to their numbers. Communist influence in labor organizations is not expected to increase by 1955, but it will be a danger in view of the grave possibilities of paralyzing general economic life.

The Joint Intelligence Group now turned to the involvement of minority and certain other groups in Soviet special actions in America:

Negroes and elements of recent European origin are receptive targets for Communist subversion as are a number of intelligent people of sound background, who are deceived by misinformation, or have a perennial weakness for “causes” to support. The professions, and various youth and women's organizations, are a fertile field for this subversive effort.

Therefore the group expected that:

In 1955 [the target date for this study], through open party and cover groups, the Soviets will have a well-organized system of espionage, and adequate channels of communications with the USSR to ensure the collection of essential political, military and economic information.

Moreover:

They will be capable, through direct and disguised propaganda, of arousing considerable animosity towards, and confusion in, the United States. The Soviets will have well-laid plans for the sabotage of industrial installations and communication facilities—plans which will go into full-scale operation in the event of war or imminent threat of war. By these means the Soviets will seriously interfere with the mobilization and utilization of the United States war potential.

The group thereupon debated another serious threat to the United States:

It is probable that the Soviets will be able to employ atomic weapons, biological and chemical warfare against the United States in 1955 either covertly or by direct military action. The Soviet capability of applying a wide variety of biological agents harmful to human, animal and/or vegetable life is practically unlimited.

Developing this theme, the Joint Intelligence Group thought that:

Methods of introduction would probably include infection of food and water supplies, detonation of small bombs at predetermined times, use of natural vectors such as fleas and lice, contamination of the air either directly or via ventilating systems, smearing agents on equipment, counters, and handrails. Animals, crops, and humans could be subjected to biological or chemical agents by covert methods without great difficulty to the saboteur.

To add to the general aura of menace implicit in their report, the group thought it conceivable that:

unassembled atomic bombs could be clandestinely introduced into the United States prior to a general attack, assembled, and then detonated in accordance with a preconceived plan. There is also a real possibility of Soviet employment of cargo vessels as atomic bomb carriers berthed in ports along both coasts.

The group thought that the primary targets for atomic and biological warfare carried out by both overt and covert means would be U.S. atomic-bomb plants and repositories and the areas around New York City, Washington, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Akron, Duluth, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Puget Sound. And among the other means of disseminating such advanced weapons were one-way suicide bombing missions and submarine-launched guided missiles (the first Russian intercontinental ballistic missile—indeed the world's first such missile—would not be fired until, coincidentally, 1957).

Against this frightening background of menaces explicit and implicit, Dropshot was written. But what was the political basis for even considering war between America and Russia? This was provided by the National Security Council, the watchdogs of the American ideology. Essentially, advised the National Security Council, there were five basic conflicts between capitalism and Communism. As the National Security Council paper NSC/40, *American Objectives vis-à-vis the USSR*, enumerated them, they were:

- (1) . . . peaceful coexistence and mutual collaboration of sovereign and independent governments, regarding and respecting each other, is an illusion and an impossibility.
- (2) That regimes which do not acknowledge Moscow's authority and ideological supremacy are wicked and harmful to human progress and that there is a duty on the part of right-thinking people everywhere to work for the overthrow or weakening of such regimes, by any and all methods which prove tactically desirable.
- (3) That there can be, in the long run, no advancement of the interests of the communist and the noncommunist world by mutual collaboration, these interests being basically conflicting and contradictory.
- (4) That conflict is the basis of international life wherever, as is the case between the Soviet Union and capitalist countries, one country does not recognize the supremacy of the other.

- (5) That spontaneous association between individuals in the communist-dominated world and individuals outside that world is evil and cannot contribute to human progress.

Concerning these five conflicts, the National Security Council and the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the objectives in two forms of war: cold and hot. The objectives for the Cold War with Russia were two:

- (1) To reduce the power and influence of Moscow to limits in which they will no longer constitute a threat to the peace and stability of international society; and (2) to bring about a change in the theory and practice of international relations as observed by the government in power in Russia.

These twin pursuits were also the basic objectives for the hot war. But there were also five supplemental war objectives. As the National Security Council determined them, these were:

- (a) Eliminate Soviet Russian domination in areas outside the borders of any Russian state allowed to exist after the war.
- (b) Destroy the structure of relationships by which the leaders of the All-Union Communist Party have been able to exert moral and disciplinary authority over individual citizens, or groups of citizens, in countries not under communist control.
- (c) Assure that any regime or regimes which may exist on traditional Russian territory in the aftermath of a war: (1) Do not have sufficient military power to wage aggressive war. (2) Impose nothing resembling the present iron curtain over contacts with the outside world.
- (d) In addition, if any Bolshevik regime is left in any part of the Soviet Union, ensure that it does not control enough of the military-industrial potential of the Soviet Union to enable it to wage war on comparable terms with any other regime or regimes which may exist on traditional Russian territory.
- (e) Seek to create postwar conditions which will: (1) Prevent the development of power relationships dangerous to the security of the United States and international peace. (2) Be conducive to the successful development of an effective world organization based upon the purposes and principles of the United Nations. (3) Permit the earliest practicable discontinuance within the United States of war aims.

As this appreciation was being promulgated, the State Department was producing a paper called *Fundamental Common Objectives*. This became part of Dropshot's political content, and it expresses vividly the degree of apprehension within the State Department about Soviet power and intentions. The appreciation warned that:

The existence of free nations, free men and freedom itself is endangered by an aggressively malignant philosophy backed by great material power and organized in monolithic dictatorship. [The free nations] are opposed on a world-wide front, including the home front, by a ruthless, resourceful and determined enemy utilizing every conceivable means, short of direct overt armed combat, to accomplish its aggressive ends.

While the State Department discounted the probability of imminent war, "the possibility that the enemy will resort to open war can never safely be ignored." The Russians respected "only determination backed by force," and while "the threat to freedom has never been more serious," the

deadly challenge of our times, indeed the survival of freedom, requires essential unity of purpose and action [because] . . . the capacities of Europe, even a United Europe, are inadequate. So are those of the United States. A united effort, spearheaded by the United Kingdom, France and the United States . . . is essential.

But the Western powers were beset by "parliamentary instability, partisan irresponsibility, nationalism, timidity, inertia, wishful thinking, ignorance, distrust, conflicting social and economic philosophies, limited resources and the compelling urge for maximum economy." Therefore the State Department urged that "agreement be sought . . . in the moral, military, political and economic fields . . . to achieve the kind of world in which freedom can endure." The objectives remained the same in the State Department paper as they were in that of the National Security Council, except in the sphere of military objectives. These were detailed as being:

- (1) To deter Soviet armed aggression against any of our homelands by making clear in advance . . . our common determination to consider an armed attack on one as an armed attack on all and to reply with all immediately available, and potentially overwhelming, force.
- (2) To build and maintain the maximum military strength compatible with sound economic health, and to achieve maximum strength and economy through military integration, since ability to repulse aggression is second in importance only to determination to do so.
- (3) To deter aggression against any other area by making clear that such aggression would involve . . . determined action . . . maximum available assistance to the country attacked . . . and the risk of general war.
- (4) To defeat existing Communist-dominated armed rebellions, as in Indo-China, Malaya and Burma, and to deter similar Communist adventures in other areas.

These objectives, and the challenges and responses they produced from the Kremlin, produced the Cold War. Gone was the Communist conception of—as Béla Kun, the Hungarian Communist, foresaw the Communist state as becoming—a "garden of flowers in which every man may pick his share." Instead, the world found itself in a noisy, nerve-racking state produced by two hostile ideologies seeking supremacy and survival. As the Dropshot planners acknowledged, in this state of affairs war might arise from accident or miscalculation. Precisely how accident or miscalculation might produce war would not become really clear until 1977, when the Brookings Institution produced a remarkable study entitled *The Use of the Armed Forces as a Political Instrument*.

The authors of this study, Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, found

that between 1945 and 1957 and between 1957 and 1973, war might have begun through accident and/or miscalculation on an alarming number of occasions—far more than is popularly supposed.

Between 1948 and 1957 the United States used its armed forces for political purposes no less than sixty-three times. In that same period Russia used hers on forty-eight occasions. Not all American demonstrations were directed at Russian or Communist activities, although the majority were. On the other hand, in all cases the Russian power demonstrations were wholly directed at America or her allies, mainly Britain, or to menace satellite or client states who showed signs of deviating from the straight-and-narrow of Communist ideology.

These are fearful figures, for in some cases—though not all—there were the seeds of war-through-miscalculation. More fearful still are the number of occasions in which strategic nuclear forces were flourished in one way or another to influence a political end.

In this matter, little or nothing is known about Russia's use of strategic nuclear forces. It is to be assumed that there were such flourishes, although they must have been conveyed privately or secretly to the governments concerned. As is to be expected, much more is known about the American flourishes.

Between 1945 and 1957 there were no less than ten such displays, with nine more occurring between 1957 and 1973. But what are strategic nuclear flourishes? The Brookings Institution study defines this latest form of power demonstration (what the British used to call gunboat diplomacy or showing-the-flag) as: "deliberate nuclear threats, whether implicit or explicit."

According to the study there were five such types of nuclear signals:

- (1) An overt and explicit threat directed at the USSR through global actions of U.S. [strategic nuclear forces]. Since the end of World War II there have been two such demonstrations—during the Cuban missile crisis and the October 1973 war in the Middle East.
- (2) In ten incidents, USAF strategic bombers were moved either closer to Russia or China, placed on increased alert, or their withdrawal from a region abroad was delayed, in the context of U.S.–Soviet or U.S.–Chinese tension.
- (3) In four incidents, Sixth Fleet aircraft carriers were used to help attain political objectives in the Middle East or Europe. In only one of these incidents, however—the 1958–1959 Berlin Crisis—was the nuclear flourish probably deliberate.
- (4) In two peculiar incidents, U.S. long-range bombers assigned to Strategic Air Command were flown to Uruguay (1947) and Nicaragua (1954). The purpose was either to reassure allies or in connection with maneuvers to overthrow the Soviet-backed Arbenz government in Guatemala.
- (5) In one case, a U.S. strategic submarine visited Turkey to demonstrate that the U.S. retained a strategic presence in the region.

The incidents in which strategic nuclear forces were used were: November 1946, U.S. aircraft shot down by Yugoslavia; February 1947, inauguration of president in Uruguay; January 1948, April 1948, and June 1948, security of

Berlin; July 1950, security of Europe; August 1953, security of Japan and South Korea; May 1954, Guatemala accepts Soviet bloc support; August 1954, China-Taiwan conflict, security of the Tachen Islands; October 1956, Suez crisis. It is to be noted that there were no strategic nuclear flourishes in 1957, the Dropshot year, although there were three in 1958—over the political crisis in Lebanon, the political crisis in Jordan, and the Quemoy and Matsu crisis.

At this time, this form of showing-the-flag seemed to many to bespeak arrogance in America. Indeed some of these demonstrations were both arrogant and unwise—the editor well remembers being with the U.S. Sixth Fleet in 1957 on a power demonstration off Gallipoli in the eastern Mediterranean. The fleet was concentrated and at anchor in the Gulf of Saros when two high-flying Badger bombers approached the fleet from the direction of Bulgaria. Across the editor's desk came this signal to the commander of the carrier division: "Two interceptors were scrambled but they failed to make the intercept, and so Sidewinders were not used. Nevertheless there was the danger of wider conflict in this action. The Badgers apart, this mighty force was landing very large numbers of Marines on Turkish soil less than a hundred miles from the Bulgarian frontier—as an entire Turkish army was maneuvering near that frontier. What were the Russians and Bulgars expected to think, especially if two of their strategic aircraft were shot down with missiles?

However, in general, fairness demands the acknowledgment that the American flourishes were characterized by both caution and success—they succeeded in obtaining the political point without casualties, commotion, and the ominous atmosphere that so often precedes major war. (A case in point is the landing of fourteen thousand American troops in Lebanon in 1958: in a highly charged and complicated situation President Eisenhower obtained a restoration of the Western position in Arabia, avoided a civil war in Lebanon, prevented the murder of Hussein and an Arab Nationalist-Communist revolution in Jordan, protected the frontiers of Israel, assured the West of its oil, and exposed the Kremlin's impotence to intervene militarily in a region far from its own frontiers—all for the loss of a single American soldier.)

But of course there were two playing the game. And Russia's flourishes were not only cruder and more blatant displays of armed might but were also attended frequently by the four horsemen of the modern apocalypse: sudden, dangerous intensifications of Russo-American antipathy; commotion; and/or bloodshed; and failure of policy.

In 1977, Faith Campbell Johnson attempted to document the instances of Soviet flourishes between 1945 and 1973, as part of the Brookings study. Her findings constitute a valuable survey of Russian power demonstrations. They also show how many times war might have developed if the ripples caused by the flourishes had turned into tidal waves.

Between 1945 and 1947 there were more than forty cases in which American or Allied (usually British) aircraft were shot down within Soviet territory or along its borders. There were seizures of Japanese fishermen in disputed waters north of Hokkaido. There were also extensive Soviet reconnaissance flights, warship patrolling, and surveillance of Western military maneuvers—to say nothing of incessant, global, and sometimes highly provocative espionage and general clandestinity. But Ms. Campbell does not include these incidents in her study because all might be considered acts of legitimate national self-protection. Ms. Campbell considers only those Russian military actions that were undertaken to make or obtain a political point or advantage. The catalog makes long, sombre reading.

Before Dropshot was promulgated, there were nineteen Soviet flourishes: January 1946, China was the target nation, and the action consisted of the occupation of Manchuria; January 1946, Korea, occupation of the north; March 1946, Iran, delay of troop withdrawals contrary to agreements; March 1946, Turkey, the massing of troops on the frontier; 1947, Austria, intimidation of non-Communist political organizations; January 1947, Germany, intimidation of non-Communist political organizations; February 1947, three incidents—Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary—all with the same purpose, to intimidate the non-Communist political elements by delaying the withdrawal of troops; August 1947, Iran, the massing of troops on the border; January 1948, Germany, interdiction of transportation into Berlin; February 1948, Germany, provocative and menacing aerial activities; February 1948, Czechoslovakia, maneuvers on the frontier; April 1948, Germany, interdiction of transportation into Berlin; June 1948, Germany, blockade of Berlin; November 1948, Iran, massing of troops on the frontier; April 1949, Philippines, shipment of arms to insurgents; August 1949, Yugoslavia, massing of troops on the border; October 1949, Hungary, menacing use of Red Army units as escorts for a sports team.

Between the promulgation late in 1949 of Dropshot and the projected 1957 D-Day, Russia rattled her sabers a further twenty-nine times:

1950-1953, Germany, sporadic harassment of traffic into Berlin; June 1950, Korea, naval presence; January 1951, Korea and China, deployment of divisions to northeast China; January 1951, Germany, occupation of two enclaves in Berlin; March 1951, Albania, provision of air-defense assistance against Yugoslavia; June 1951, Iran, massing of troops on the frontiers; August 1951, Czechoslovakia, provision of air-defense assistance against non-Communist forces; August 1951, Germany, provocative troop maneuvers; September 1951, Yugoslavia, massing of troops on the frontier; June 1952, Austria, harassment of American aircraft; 1953, Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania, port visits; April 1953, Great Britain, port visits; June 1953, Germany, crushing political uprisings; July 1954, Sweden, port visit; September 1954, Germany, harassment of air traffic; October 1954, China, withdrawal from naval base; May 1955, Austria, withdrawal of troops; October 1955, Finland, withdrawal from naval base; October 1955, China, port visit; May 1956, Yugoslavia, port visit; May 1956,

Germany, withdrawal of some troops; July 1956, Holland and Denmark, port visit; October 1956, Poland, maneuvers; October 1956, Hungary, intervention in civil war; November 1956, Hungary, crushing unacceptable Communist regime; November 1956, Germany, harassment of traffic; November 1956, Egypt, maneuvers and troop movements in response to Allied military operations; August 1957, Germany, harassment of traffic into Berlin; September 1957, Syria, port visit.

But if all these events were quickly forgotten in the public mind, the generals and admirals did not forget them. They constituted a pattern of arrogance and mayhem that might dissolve into general war at any time. Therefore that war had to be planned for, and among the forms of war the planners had to contemplate was war by action and by miscalculation—and preventive war. The last, it is clear, is a bad, thorny problem, for it implies sneak attacks while the enemy sleeps—a tactic foreign, it is said, to the Anglo-Saxon spirit of fair play. However, there is some evidence that preventive war was indeed studied by the Pentagon (as no doubt it was studied by the Kremlin). This Pentagon study seems to have been undertaken just after Russia exploded her first atomic bomb in August 1949.

After that explosion it became clear at the Pentagon that America's superiority in strategic nuclear forces might be very temporary. Given that a war seemed both imminent and inevitable, would it not be foolhardy to wait for Russia to strike first? Would it not be better to get it over with while America was still the stronger of the two powers? After all, America possessed at least 300 atomic bombs at the end of 1949 and had 840 strategic bombers in service with another 1,350 in mothballs—and all Russia had at best was 200 strategic bombers of the B-29 type. The planners looked at the predictions. Russia might have 10 atomic bombs by the end of 1949. That number could not be decisive in any way except, perhaps, against Great Britain. By mid-1950 she might have 25. Still this stockpile could not be decisive. But now the situation began to get menacing. She could have 50 by mid-1951, 75 by mid-1952, 110 by mid-1953. Those figures really could be dangerous.

As Major General Truman H. Landon of USAF Operations declared in a study of the effectiveness in 1950 of the Strategic Air Command (a study that was closely associated with Dropshot):

Successful delivery of ten to fifty atomic weapons on selected targets in the United States could seriously impede our mobilization for war for a considerable period in that the attacks would cause the destruction of the headquarters of the Federal Government, the partial destruction of large cities, and more than one million casualties. It could delay or reduce materially the scale of our planned strategic atomic air offensive and could cause great delay in projecting United States forces and war materials by neutralizing key centers.

With these somber words in mind, it can be seen readily that the Pentagon, given the world political climate, could very easily have decided that a preventive

war might not only be necessary but also desirable. Thus in a paper associated with Dropshot these words appear:

This Government has been forced, for the purposes of the political war now in progress, to consider more definite and militant objectives towards Russia even now, in time of peace, than it was ever called upon to formulate with respect to either Germany or Japan in advance of the actual hostilities with those countries.

The gravest threat to the security of the United States [stems] from the hostile designs and formidable power of the USSR, and from the nature of the Soviet system. The political, economic, and psychological warfare which the USSR is now waging has dangerous potentialities for weakening the relative world position of the United States and disrupting its traditional institutions by means short of war, unless sufficient resistance is encountered in the policies of this and other non-communist countries. The risk of war with the USSR is sufficient to warrant, in common prudence, timely adequate preparation by the United States. Soviet domination of the potential power of Eurasia, whether achieved by armed aggression or by political and subversive means, would be strategically and politically unacceptable to the United States.

Moreover:

The USSR has already engaged the United States in a struggle for power. While it cannot be predicted with certainty whether, or when, the present political warfare will involve armed conflict, nevertheless there exists a continuing danger of war at any time.

This statement, which was promulgated by the Joint Chiefs on 18 August 1948, shows clearly that the Pentagon had something more in mind than contingency planning. There is some evidence that Louis Johnson, secretary of defense, 1949–1950, backed preventive war—what Hanson Baldwin of *The New York Times* called “instituting a war to compel cooperation for peace.” And there was one other statement that shows that the grave political situation in 1948—the Berlin crisis was at its height, Berlin was blockaded, the Kremlin had seized control of Czechoslovakia, Stalin was trying to wreck the Marshall Plan and plunge Europe back into the Dark Ages, and Mao was knocking at the gates of Peking and elsewhere—had caused the American generals to examine their options. This statement was tucked away toward the end of the long paper by the Joint Chiefs, and it said:

In addition to the risk of war, a danger equally to be guarded against is the possibility that Soviet political warfare might seriously weaken the relative position of the United States, enhance Soviet strength and either lead to our ultimate defeat short of war, or force us into a war under dangerously unfavorable conditions.

This state of affairs, the paper went on, would be

facilitated by vacillation, appeasement, or isolationist concepts in our foreign policy, leading to a loss of our allies and influence; by internal disunity or subversion; by eco-

nomic instability in the form of depression or inflation; or by excessive or inadequate armament and foreign aid expenditures.

Clearly, therefore, the Joint Chiefs would have thought there was reason and excuse for preventive war in 1948-1949. However, preventive war was not launched. Apart from all else, the United States could not have won such a war in 1949-1950. Strategic Air Command was not capable of dealing Russia a single irreparable blow at this time. It was no more than a deterrent force. Uneasy at the lack of real power and good intelligence, the Joint Chiefs began a plan for a war launched by Russia—Dropshot.

The general assumptions for Dropshot were:

- a. For the present, it is improbable that the USSR will wage war with military weapons against the United States;
- b. United States support to the nations of western Europe cannot be expected to continue indefinitely. Unless their response to our assistance is so accelerated that they soon are capable of assuming a major portion of the responsibility for checking communism in Europe, the international situation may become favorable for major Soviet aggression;
- c. Unless a major economic depression develops in the west, or unless differences in the political and economic aims of the western powers permit exploitation by Soviet diplomacy, the Soviets will cautiously attempt to strengthen their position in western Europe and the Middle East for future exploitation; meanwhile they will concentrate on consolidation of the Communist position in eastern Europe and in the USSR itself. In the Far East consolidation of gains and expansion will be pressed;
- d. On the basis that the western nations will not voluntarily accept communism, a major war appears to be ultimately inevitable unless one or more of the following occurs:
 - (1) The Soviet ideology of Communist domination of the world and the aggressive policy of the USSR designed to achieve this domination are radically changed;
 - (2) The military potential of the United States and other non-Communist nations and their psychological resistance are sufficiently strong to convince the Soviets that a Soviet gamble for achieving world domination by armed forces is unlikely of success; and
 - (3) Nationalistic deviation, like that of Yugoslavia, becomes a serious weakness of the Soviet bloc. Such a weakness is susceptible to exploitation by the United States. If the United States military position is strong enough to deter the USSR from attack, as an opening wedge the United States might, by undermining Soviet prestige, be able to develop a group of anti-Moscow Communist nations.
- e. If the political leaders of the USSR should decide to resort to war to accomplish their aggressive intentions, war will break out either without warning or following a few months' period of political negotiations and increasing tension;
- f. As long as the USSR pursues a policy of world aggression and is opposed by the United States, the United Nations alone will not be an effective instrument for the maintenance of world peace and security;
- g. Whether or not the USSR remains in the UN cannot be accepted as a clear-cut indication that a decision has been reached by the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Politburo) relative to the use of military forces for major aggression.

- h. Allied occupation forces (including Soviet forces) will be maintained in Germany and United States occupation forces may remain in Japan although their military strength and effectiveness may be reduced for political or budgetary reasons. Allied occupation forces in Austria and Anglo-American occupation forces in Trieste may be removed for political reasons. American and Soviet military missions will, in all probability, remain in a divided Korea; and
- i. As long as the present regime in the USSR remains in power, the political, economic, and psychological warfare now being waged against the United States will continue and will vary in intensity, although not in intention, from time to time.

The overall strategic concept of Dropshot was:

In collaboration with our allies, to impose the war objectives of the United States upon the USSR by destroying the Soviet will and capacity to resist, by conducting a strategic offensive in Western Eurasia and a strategic defensive in the Far East.

Initially: To defend the Western Hemisphere *and the home territory of our European Allies*; to launch a powerful air offensive; to initiate a discriminate containment of the Soviet Powers within the general area; North Pole-Greenland Sea-Western Scandinavia-Rhine River-Alps-Piave River-Adriatic Sea-Crete-Iskenderun Pocket-Turkish-Syrian border-Iran-Himalayas-South China-East China Sea-Japan Sea-Tsugaru Strait-Bering Sea-Bering Strait-North Pole; to secure and control essential strategic areas, bases and lines of communication; and to wage political, economic, psychological and underground warfare, while exerting unremitting pressure against the Soviet citadel, utilizing all means to force the maximum attrition of Soviet war resources.

Subsequently: To launch coordinated offensive operations of all arms against the USSR as required.

The basic undertakings of Dropshot were:

In collaboration with our Allies:

- a. To maintain the security and war-making capacity of the Western Hemisphere.
- b. *To defend the U.K. with particular attention to its continued availability as a base for offensive operations.*
- c. *To defend western Scandinavia, selected areas in Denmark, and western continental Europe as far east as possible of the line Rhine River-Alps-Piave River.*
- d. To conduct, at the earliest practicable date, a strategic air offensive against the vital war-making capacity of the USSR, and other air offensive operations against suitable targets of the Soviet Powers.
- e. To expand the over-all power of the armed forces for later offensive operations against the Soviet Powers.
- f. To secure and control land and sea areas and bases essential to the accomplishment of the over-all strategic concept.
- g. To secure sea and air lines of communication essential to the accomplishment of the over-all strategic concept, and
- h. To provide essential aid to our Allies in support of efforts contributing directly to the over-all strategic concept.

The Dropshot air planners then provided the committee with this précis of the air plan:

1. Under the over-all strategic concept it is essential that (a) the air offensive be initiated immediately, (b) it be initiated and sustained in sufficient force to be effective, (c) targets or target systems destroyed be those which contribute most to the reduction of war-making capacity, and (d) the results of the effort be reflected immediately in the reduction of the offensive capabilities of the Soviet military forces, particularly with respect to their capability to employ weapons of mass destruction.

EMPLOYMENT OF THE ATOMIC BOMB

2. The use of atomic weapons in a strategic air campaign against the U.S.S.R. . . . is considered essential to the provision of adequate initial destructive capabilities to that air effort. The extent to which its quantitative use will influence the composition, size, deployment, and the employment of strategic air forces depends on Soviet counter measure development, both offensive and defensive, on the effectiveness of available bombs, and on the ability of either side to deliver atomic bombs against selected targets within definite time periods. For planning purposes herein it is assumed that the development of atomic munitions in the U.S.S.R. will give the U.S. a quantitative advantage, on D-Day, in the order of 10 to 1 and that the Soviets lag slightly behind the U.S. in technical development of both offensive and defensive weapons.

3. Target systems selected for atomic attack, and the timing and magnitude of the initial attack are based on the requirement for early and effective preventative attack if such action becomes feasible and on the requirement for destruction of their offensive capabilities against our own war potential. They are extended to include the early destruction of selected elements of the Soviet war-making capacity. The following general considerations are deemed pertinent to atomic target selection at present and in 1955.

- a. Destruction of stockpiles of atomic bombs or other weapons of mass destruction, stocks and processing plants of fissionable materiels, and any known operational supplies of such weapons must be destroyed as soon as possible after the outbreak of hostilities.
- b. The initial atomic campaign must provide for its employment against the political, governmental, administrative, and technical and scientific elements of the Soviet nation. They include urban areas as an essential element in basic industries. Inseparable from the destruction of urban areas, major destruction would be accomplished on industry itself. No over-all change in the location of Soviet centers of industry and population can be expected to occur during the next 8 years, with the exception of additional development of limited extent, hence, weapon requirements will be modified primarily by the effectiveness of available bombs, and means of delivery, rather than through revision of the over-all target complexes.
- c. The use of atomic weapons in reasonable quantity will permit the achievement of great physical destruction with relatively small effort within a short time. In addition to this physical destruction, it seems reasonable to anticipate that the use of the weapon would create a condition of chaos and extreme confusion. The magnitude

of this increased effect cannot be accurately evaluated since at least up to this time it will be in the abstract. It seems logical, however, to anticipate that the psychological effect, properly exploited, could become an important factor in the timing of and the effort necessary to cause the cessation of hostilities and indicates the necessity and profitability of concurrently conducting a well-planned and carefully-executed psychological warfare campaign which would take full advantage of the conditions thus created.

- d. The importance of the psychological factor in effectuating defeat may be increased between now and 1955 through more detailed analysis of the global after-effects to be anticipated from large scale employment of weapons of great physical destructive power. Should the Western Hemisphere and European economies become sufficiently inter-dependent that material destruction of a large portion of the latter would result in near collapse of the former, it may become advisable to abandon the concept of destruction of the enemy's physical *means* to wage war in favor of a concept involving destruction of his will through selective attack of limited complexes or mass attack of people with, in each instance, a minimum of damage to physical property. This concept has not been analyzed in this study and conclusions as to force requirements are not modified by these considerations. However, continuing development of biological warfare techniques is definitely indicated.
- e. It does not appear possible at this time to analyze the psychological vulnerability of the U.S.S.R. in order to arrive at a proper balance between physical and moral effects to be applied in order to assure the attainment of national war objectives in the minimum time at minimum cost. In this campaign emphasis has again been placed on physical destruction of the enemy's ability to resist. It is therefore necessary that weapons of mass destruction be applied as early as possible and to the extent estimated to be necessary for the destruction of the Soviet ability to resist without undue emphasis on their intangible effects. The limited forces which we can anticipate will be available, and the consequences of failure to destroy her offensive capability *early*, require that this course of action be currently contemplated.

TARGET SYSTEMS FOR STRATEGIC (LONG-RANGE) AIR ATTACK

4. Study of the best available basic industrial data and intelligence information indicates that most important segments of the Soviet economy and most important elements of her war-making capacity which are vulnerable to air attack are: a. Stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, and facilities for their production; b. Key government and control facilities; c. Urban industrial areas; d. Petroleum industry; e. Aerial mining against submarines; f. Submarine bases, construction and repair facilities; g. Transportation system; h. Aircraft industry; i. Coke, iron and steel industry; j. The electric power system.

While the Dropshot planners did contemplate and plan a long war, they hoped and prayed for a short one in which Russia would be demolished by the Strategic Air Command (SAC) in the opening weeks of the campaign. Therefore the principal factors governing Dropshot planning were that the war would be started by Russia and that it would begin with a series of surprise attacks against SAC bases. Since the British bases were then (in 1949) the most vital—

Area?

N. C.
(see
Keegan)

only from there, given the range of the B-29 and the B-50, could Moscow and Leningrad and the other targets in western Russia be atomized—the Dropshot planners had to calculate whether the British bases were secure. The estimates were discouraging for a number of complicated and interrelated reasons. For these reasons the planners decided that the United States would not be able to depend upon the British bases after D+60. The bases (and large areas of England) would certainly be atomized if the Russians had sufficient numbers of atomic bombs by D-Day.

However, SAC hoped that it would have knocked Russia out before D+60. Therefore the Pentagon decided to go ahead and use the British bases. If these could be secured for sixty days, so the rationale went, then America could win.

Now the planners turned to the question of the effectiveness of SAC itself. The strategic air-war plan in Dropshot required that SAC be capable of mounting and succeeding in six thousand sorties against Russia and Russian-occupied territory in the first three months of war. They required that the bombers deliver about 300 atomic bombs and 20,000 tons of high explosive conventional bombs on about 200 targets located in about 100 urban areas. The Dropshot planners required that the atomic phase be completed in thirty days in order to achieve the psychological effect necessary to compel the Russians to surrender. The primary targets would be Soviet atomic, air, petroleum, steel, and munitions industries and primary administrative centers, such as Moscow and Leningrad.

But could SAC do the job? There was no way of telling except through war games, and of course the new weapons—the H-bombs, advanced A-bombs, B-52s, B-47s, ICBM—were an unknown factor. Therefore the Joint Chiefs were compelled to proceed from the basis of what might happen if war came in the period 1948–1951. This they did.

The Joint Chiefs directed Lieutenant General J. E. Hull, an officer highly experienced in the problems of strategic warfare, to form a group and then study and report upon the effectiveness of SAC. For planning purposes the target date for the war they visualized was 1 January 1950, not 1 January 1957. After a year of study Hull produced a report which was called *Evaluation of Effectiveness of Strategic Air Operations*.

This report shows that, as in so many other fields, the United States' intelligence about Russia was lamentable, for clearly Hull had to make a study of the effectiveness of an attack force on the basis of an almost total ignorance of the defense.

The Hull evaluators were, therefore, compelled to *assume*—a very dangerous thing to do in war or when planning for it—two different levels of Russian defense capability. One was a high level of competence, in which Russia had modernized its World War II apparatus, incorporating the Luftwaffe's experience, equipment, and techniques. The lower estimate assumed that the Russians had not extensively developed their air defenses much beyond the state of the science as it existed in World War II.

Against this background of ignorance and assumption (two of the great of-

fenses in military lore), General Hull and his team examined the evidence to see whether SAC could or could not get through to targets in nine strategic areas: Moscow–Leningrad; the Urals; the Black Sea; the Caucasus; the Archangel area; Tashkent–Alma-Ata; Novosibirsk; Lake Baikal; and Vladivostok.

The Hull team ran very extensive and expensive aerial tests, war games, and computations of many kinds, visualizing every conceivable situation. The sum total of this theoretical experience was then studied and two aerial war games were played.

The first was a daylight raid by 223 B-29s and B-50s, carrying thirty-two atomic bombs against the Black Sea target area. Very large numbers of electronic countermeasure (ECM) aircraft were employed to divert the Soviet defenses from the atom-bomb carriers and to “red-herring” the ground defenses. It was assumed that the area was defended by 270 jet fighters and 550 piston-engined aircraft.

The attackers crossed the frontier at a cruising altitude of thirty-five thousand feet and bombed from thirty-five thousand feet—important factors where piston-engined aircraft were concerned because of their inability to operate with any high degree of effectiveness beyond thirty thousand feet. The higher and lower levels of defense competences were assumed and applied. In terms of SAC casualties, the findings were close to disastrous. ¹⁷

In the case of the more competent level of defense, SAC was judged to have lost thirty-five aircraft to fighters (twenty after they had released their bombs—a point, it should be said, in SAC's favor), two to antiaircraft artillery fire, and five to what were called (without definition) “operational causes.” In addition, fourteen aircraft were judged to have aborted before reaching the target. As a result, twenty-four of the thirty-two bombs dispatched were judged to have been dropped on their targets. Three bombs were lost in crashing aircraft, two were returned in the aborted aircraft, and three were dropped outside the intended target area.

The second war game was a night raid, again into the Black Sea area. The more competent defense was assumed. Ninety-six aircraft went in with thirty-two atomic bombs (again the majority of the planes were ECMs, there to baffle the defenses). Fifty night fighters were assumed to be defending the target area. In the raid seven aircraft were lost to night fighters, two to antiaircraft artillery fire, and two to “operational causes.” Twenty-three bombs reached their intended aiming points; three were lost; four returned in aborting aircraft—eight • aborted; and two fell outside the target areas. In neither war game did the Hull report state how many aircraft were damaged or damaged beyond repair by enemy action, but other evidence indicates that this type of casualty would have been heavy.

In any event, in both cases, about 70 percent of the bombers succeeded in dropping their bombs in the intended target areas, but with this important difference: the night raid was executed with half the bombers used in the daylight raid and with about a quarter of the casualties. The capacity of SAC to get

through was distinctly encouraging. But the losses were serious because, if they persisted, SAC would not be able to sustain the campaign without drawing upon the mothballed reserve. Accordingly, the Hull evaluators turned to this reserve and discovered an alarming factor: very few of these aircraft would be airworthy for eighteen months. Here then was another strike to add against the campaign's feasibility—another strike to add to the base question to limit SAC's ability to carry out its mission.

With all the data at hand, the Hull evaluators undertook four atomic offensives to establish just how serious the casualty and replacement situation might become. Their findings were embodied in a chapter entitled "Estimate of Overall Losses and Results for Several Different Hypothetical Atomic Offensives."

In Offensive A, the striking force available consisted of 260 B-29s and B-50s, 30 B-36s, and 72 very-long-range reconnaissance planes.

Against the lower level of defense, 871 sorties on three night attacks resulted in the loss of thirty-three aircraft, with twenty-three damaged beyond repair—fifty-six aircraft, or just over a sixth of the force. These were very heavy casualties and could not be sustained, as we shall see. On the other hand, 186 atomic bombs were delivered to the targets, representing 85 percent of those intended.

With the higher Russian defense capability, 1,039 sorties were launched in four night attacks to deliver 176 bombs on target (80-percent satisfactory delivery). But the losses were grievous: 123 aircraft were lost over enemy territory, with 25 damaged beyond repair. This represented a 32-percent loss factor. Such weakened to the point where very rapidly it would not be able to sustain the atomic campaign.

These were grave data. But when the Hull group came to evaluate what would have happened on daylight offensives, the news became even graver.

In four days of massed daylight operations against the higher-level Soviet defense, 1,221 sorties delivered 153 bombs (70-percent completion) with the loss of 222 aircraft over enemy territory and 27 damaged beyond repair. *This was an overall loss of 55 percent of the force available*—catastrophically high World War II. (During that war the worst loss was that suffered by the Royal Air Force Bomber Command when Four Group lost 20.6 percent of its aircraft—twenty out of ninety-seven Halifaxes—in the great attack on Nuremberg on the night of 30–31 March 1944.)

For the lower level of Russian defense competence, the dispersed type of day raids could—Hull judged—be employed. Otherwise daylight raids were out of the question now and in the future. Even so, the dispersed daylight raids would suffer heavier casualties than were encountered at any time during World War II. This war game provided for 993 sorties in four days of operations. The analysis showed that in order to deliver 185 bombs on target (85-percent comple-

tion), SAC would lose 168 aircraft over Russia, and 22 would be lost through other causes or damaged beyond repair. This meant 41-percent casualties. This rate was very high indeed—probably unacceptably high—and if such casualties persisted, it meant that SAC would probably be unable to complete the entire Dropshot program.

The Hull group now made a final casualty summary. They decided that the atomic phase of the air campaign could be carried out at night with total losses of the order of 30 percent of the bomber force for 80-percent completion of the program. Dispersed raids in daylight would be possible only against the less effective defense. For the better of the two defense systems, only concentrated raids could be laid on in daylight, and the strike force would lose 55 percent of the bomber force to complete 70 percent of the offensive.

In conclusion, the Hull group turned to the question of logistic factors in the campaign. The analysis showed that a strategic bombing effort of the magnitude of the campaign could *not* be supported by the supplies of aircraft, parts, fuel, ordnance, personnel, and transportation that would exist on 1 May 1950—even assuming that the bases would be available. However, the evaluators agreed, a more limited effort, which included the whole of the atomic phase of the air attack, could be executed beginning 1 May 1950. This involved the delivery of some 300 atomic bombs, including a second-strike allocation of some 70 such weapons. They found that one of the key factors preventing the execution of the entire aerial attack program was the current strategic reserves of fuel. These were *not* adequate; indeed sufficient fuel only for two thousand sorties would be available—enough to complete only the atomic phase of the campaign.

Secondly, Hull reported that in the opinion of his group the bomber force allocated to SAC for the air campaign was too small to complete the plan satisfactorily, given the expected casualty rates of the campaign. Moreover, additional bombers could be made available only at the expense of those committed to training, testing, command support, and administration. Hull warned that if these were used, the Phase 2 of the campaign would be seriously delayed.

To add to SAC's difficulties, the airlift needed to deploy SAC units overseas in Phase 1 was in excess of Military Air Transport Service capacity. The only way the emergency deployment could be undertaken was by the use of bombers to help move the men and the equipment needed to launch the air attack—and this in turn would affect the bombers' ability to launch the immediate retaliation which war with Russia would demand. In all, Hull reported, the attack would require "considerable modification to make it logically feasible."

As for the British bases, Hull went on, an inspection revealed that they were "exceedingly vulnerable" to air attack, that no organized defense would exist at the time SAC began to execute its war plan, and that the British would require thirty days' warning to organize such a defense. Hull noted that "Since the Soviets realize the significance of these bases and appreciate the difficulties of a tight air defense, it is not unlikely that their first hostile move would be to

attack these bases" and deny them to SAC. Such an attack, of course, would wreck not only the aerial campaign but also the other counterblows in Dropshot.

On this somber note the study ended. Two months later, on 11 April 1950, Major General S. E. Anderson, Director of USAF plans and operations, commenting upon the Hull report, wrote a memorandum to W. Stuart Symington, the Secretary of the Air Force. Given the acute political tensions that existed, it must have been an extremely disturbing document for the President, the Cabinet, and the Joint Chiefs.

General Anderson agreed that the SAC campaign was not entirely a feasible operation of war. He agreed that only the atomic phase could be carried out with the men and materiel available on D-Day, but even so SAC would not be able to guarantee a primary requirement built into the air plan: that the atomic attack be compressed into the shortest possible time "in order to create the greatest possible shock effect on the USSR." Such was the state of SAC in those days that Plan Trojan, for example, did not propose to atomize either Moscow or Leningrad until the ninth day of the war. But why would SAC's counteroffensive as planned be so slow in getting airborne? Because, as Anderson reported, of "insufficient bases overseas [and] insufficient prestocked fuel supplies overseas."

But there were also other factors: too few Military Air Transport Command planes to ferry the ground crews, weapons, and ground handling equipment; sabotage and bombardment at both ends of the flight; political negotiations with the governments concerned; and the general effects and shock of the surprise attack the Russians were expected to launch.

These matters were, of course, corrected later, and SAC did soon afterward reach a degree of efficiency that was almost superhuman. However, at that time Anderson was compelled to declare that: "In the event of war in 1950, the Air Force can (a) complete the atomic phase of the planned strategic air offensive (b) provide inadequate air defense for the United States and Alaska (c) initiate mobilization and training." The Air Force could not "(a) complete the entire air offensive called for in Trojan or (b) provide the air defense for the United States and Alaska with the maximum risk we can afford to take."

To sum up, if the Hull and Anderson reports are accepted as being in the realm of accurate forecasting and analysis, then the aerial campaign as planned could not have succeeded. It was true that appalling damage could have been inflicted on Russia, but only at appalling loss to the U.S. Air Force. Presumably Truman, the Cabinet, and the Joint Chiefs would have accepted this loss, but would SAC have done so? If the evidence of World War II and the Vietnam war has validity, air crews are prepared to accept serious losses up to a point. But as was demonstrated after the terrible losses suffered by the Royal Air Force Bomber Command at Nuremberg during the raid of 30-31 March 1944, a form of mutiny spreads through even elite forces when casualties become catastrophic—and as the above figures show, Dropshot losses would have been catastrophic.

Even assuming that SAC would have stuck to its task, there remains the considerable body of evidence that through lack of bases, crews, aircraft, stockpiles, and transportation, the campaign probably would not have succeeded. In that case it is not unreasonable to postulate that Dropshot would have failed. And what would this have meant if war had broken out in 1957—or at any other time during the period that Dropshot was being conceived and written?

It would have meant that America would have been in for a very long war that would have been fought, in all likelihood, much as George Orwell thought it would be fought in his novel *1984*: two exhausted giants hurling missiles at each other from time to time in an interminable and inconclusive war that ruined the world. Moreover, it is reasonable to suppose that had America failed—had Dropshot failed—then the Red Army would have emerged the master of Europe.

Dropshot did not, of course, change the world by itself. But the circumstances surrounding it most certainly did. The major consequence was that it made America realize that it was not as powerful as it thought it was, and this realization catapulted the world into the twenty-first century with a rapidity and dynamism that is to be compared with the Industrial Revolution—and the October Revolution. It created a Titan—even though the Kremlin thought and thinks that that Titan may be made of paper.

Anthony Cave Brown,
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from
Dropshot
80-8